

# Supervisor Romaine, Councilwoman Kepert and NYS Senator Lee Zeldin Call on LIRR to Replant Clear Cut Trees Between Train Tracks and Neighborhood Homes in South Country Community

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**Farmingville, NY** - Brookhaven Supervisor Ed Romaine, Councilwoman Connie Kepert and New York State Senator Lee Zeldin joined local residents and community leaders in demanding that the Long Island Railroad replace a natural buffer between the train tracks and local homes. The railroad recently clear cut several sections of trees along the Montauk branch line through East Patchogue and Brookhaven hamlet, resulting in an increase in noise and dust, and removing the natural visual buffer between residential homes and the railway. Pictured left to right are area residents Laurie Bothwell, Dr. Bob Baker and Herbert Woll, Supervisor Romaine, Senator Zeldin, Councilwoman Kepert, resident Gary Alexander and Sarah Hartman, representing Assemblyman Ed Hennessey.

Several months ago, the LIRR began to trim trees and vegetation to help prevent service disruptions similar to those experienced by the railroad in the aftermath of Super Storm Sandy. According to residents in the area, the trimming resulted in clear cutting trees more than 20' from the tracks, which appears to have exceeded the requirements to safely maintain the right of way. They also reported that there was not a proper cleanup of the area, leaving a large amount of the cuttings along the tracks. Their concerns led them to call Supervisor Ed Romaine's office and other local and State officials, including Senator Lee Zeldin, who are now demanding that the LIRR restore a buffer in these areas, and look into whether the trimming crew acted on their own or were following corporate policy.

"It appears that the LIRR cut down an excessive amount of trees without concern for how it would impact the quality of life for the people living along the tracks," said Supervisor Romaine. "While we fully understand the need to protect and preserve the safety of the trains, crews, and riding public, we believe they went far beyond what was necessary to maintain the right-of-way. I join with Senator Zeldin and the residents in demanding that the LIRR review their policy, replace many of the trees and help restore the buffer that has been damaged by their actions."

"The LIRR has an obligation to ensure public safety," said Senator Zeldin. "While that should remain a highest priority, they need to do so without unnecessarily imposing on the quality of life of our neighbors. I am standing with our residents on this issue and I am encouraging the LIRR to find a way to strike a balance that satisfies all parties."

"The LIRR needs to be responsive to us here at the end of the line. It is as simple as that. Keeping the tracks cleared of vegetation for safety purposes is something we all accept and support. However, what was done in this case-clear

cutting trees and shrubbery so that residents' natural privacy screen and sound barrier have been entirely stripped away, right up to their backyards and in some cases beyond-is insupportable on any level. Along the Montauk Branch from East Patchogue to Brookhaven, residents have lost a very precious commodity: privacy and quietude in their own homes. It is way past time for the LIRR to respond to this issue effectively and fix the very real problem they have created. And it is high time they change the way they do business in our communities," said Assemblyman Hennessey.

"What the Long Island Railroad did represents an utter disregard for the rights of residents who live along the railroad tracks. I am calling for them to replant the vegetation which once provided protection to Brookhaven residents. Give these residents back their privacy, safety and quality of life," stated Councilwoman Kepert.

**Division of Public Information \* Office of the Supervisor**

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